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Examiner: Duc Minh Nguyen

In the claims:

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1. (Canceled).
2. (Canceled).
3. (Canceled).
4. (Canceled).
5. (Canceled).
6. (Canceled).
7. (Canceled).
8. (Canceled).
9. (Canceled).
10. (Canceled).
11. (Canceled).
12. (Canceled).
13. (Canceled).
14. (Canceled).
15. (Canceled).
16. (Canceled).
17. (Canceled).
18. (Canceled).
19. (Canceled).
20. (Canceled).
21. (Canceled).

22. (Canceled).

23. (Canceled).

24. (Canceled).

25. (Original) A method for a system including a plurality of encoders each for receiving a digital signal to generate a respective encoded signal, a generator for generating a test signal, a plurality of cards each coupled to a respective conductor for sending signals to a respective subscriber, the method comprising the step, performed in each card, of

maintaining a first current path between a respective encoder and the respective conductor, to transfer the encoded signal from the encoder to a respective subscriber, and the following subsequent steps, performed in one of the cards, of

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breaking the first current path;

making a second current path between the generator and the respective conductor, to transfer the test signal from the generator to the conductor, and the following step, performed currently with the two previous steps, in remaining ones of the cards, of

maintaining the first current path between the respective encoder and the respective conductor, to transfer the respective encoded signal from the encoder to the respective subscriber.

26. (Original) The method of claim 25 further including the step, performed after the making step, of connecting another encoder to the second current path.

27. (Original) A method for a system including a plurality of encoders for receiving a digital signal to generate a plurality of respective encoded signals, a generator for generating a test signal, a plurality of cards each coupled to a plurality of respective conductor for sending signals to a plurality of respective subscribers, the method comprising the step, performed in each card, of

maintaining first current paths between a respective encoder and the respective conductors, to transfer the encoded signals from the encoder to the respective subscribers, and the following subsequent steps, performed in one of the cards, of

breaking one of the first current paths;

making a second current path between the generator and one of the respective conductors, to transfer the test signal from the generator to the one of the respective conductors, and the following step, performed in remaining ones of the cards currently with the two previous steps, of

maintaining the first current paths between the respective encoder and the respective conductors, to transfer the encoded signals from the encoder to the respective subscribers.

28. (Original) A processing system for a first system having a plurality of conductors and a plurality of subscribers, the processing system comprising:

a plurality of encoders each for receiving a digital signal to generate a respective encoded signal;

a generator for generating a test signal;

a plurality of cards each coupled to a respective conductor for sending signals to a respective subscriber, each card including

a current switch for maintaining a first current path between a respective encoder and the respective conductor, to transfer the encoded signal from the encoder to a respective subscriber, and for making a second current path between the generator and the respective conductor, to transfer the test signal from the generator to the conductor.

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29. (Original) The processing system of claim 28 wherein each current switch includes a first current switch for maintaining the first current path, and a second current switch for maintaining the second current path.

30. (Original) The processing system of claim 28 further including a current switch for connecting another encoder to the second current path.

31. (Original) The processing system of claim 28 wherein each current switch includes a mettalic relay.

32. (Original) A processing system for a first system having a plurality of conductors and a plurality of subscribers, the processing system comprising:

a plurality of encoders for receiving a digital signal to generate a plurality of respective encoded signals;

a generator for generating a test signal;

a plurality of cards each coupled to a plurality of respective conductor for sending signals to a plurality of respective subscribers;

means for maintaining first current paths between a respective encoder and the respective conductors, to transfer the encoded signals from the encoder to the respective subscribers;

means, activated in one of the cards, for making a second current path between the generator and one of the respective conductors, to transfer the test signal from the generator to the one of the respective conductors; and

means, activated in remaining ones of the cards, for maintaining the first current paths between the respective encoder and the respective conductors, to transfer the encoded signals from the encoder to the respective subscribers.

33. (Original) A processing system for a first system having a plurality of conductors and a plurality of subscribers, the processing system comprising:

a plurality of encoders each for receiving a digital signal to generate a respective encoded signal;

a generator for generating a test signal;

a plurality of cards each coupled to a respective conductor for sending signals to a respective subscriber;

means, activatable for each card, for maintaining a first current path between a respective encoder and the respective conductor, to transfer the encoded signal from the encoder to a respective subscriber;

means for making, activated in one of the card, a second current path between the generator and the respective conductor, to transfer the test signal from the generator to the conductor;

means for maintaining, activated in remaining ones of the cards, the first current path between the respective encoder and the respective conductor, to transfer the respective encoded signal from the encoder to the respective subscriber.

34. (Original) The system of claim 33 further including means for connecting another encoder to the second current path.

35. (Original) A processing system for a first system having a plurality of conductors and a plurality of subscribers, the processing system comprising:

a plurality of encoders for receiving a digital signal to generate a plurality of respective encoded signals;

a generator for generating a test signal;

a plurality of cards each coupled to a plurality of respective conductor for sending signals to a plurality of respective subscribers, each card associated with

a current switch for maintaining first current paths between a respective encoder and the respective conductors, to transfer the encoded signals from the encoder to the respective subscribers, and for making a second current path between the generator and one of the respective conductors, to transfer the test signal from the generator to the one of the respective conductors.